



JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM  
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN  
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES  
LANSING



MARIANNE UDOW  
DIRECTOR

August 28, 2006

Detroit News  
Nolan Finley, Editorial Page Editor  
615 W. Lafayette  
Detroit, MI 48226

Dear Mr. Finley,

Your August 25 editorial on welfare reform perpetuated a myth about citizens who receive welfare and omitted any mention of Governor Granholm's plan for fundamental welfare reforms already under way in Michigan.

This administration's approach to welfare reform - the Jobs, Education & Training (JET) program - was implemented in April 2006 and builds on lessons learned from changes to welfare made 10 years ago under President Clinton's leadership. JET is all about helping Michigan citizens in poverty overcome barriers so they can support their families and contribute to Michigan's economy. JET also requires those families to do what they can to help themselves. For those who don't do what they can, the Governor is on record supporting stronger sanctions.

To say that citizens who have received cash assistance for longer than a cumulative four years just need "an additional push to make it on their own" feeds a destructive stereotype about welfare recipients and is not true. For the vast majority of these families, welfare is a lifeline, not a lifestyle choice. They want to become self supporting and independent, but they need help to overcome major challenges like functional illiteracy, serious mental health problems and physical disabilities. For these families, welfare provides cash assistance of \$489 per month for a family of three (37 percent of poverty), hardly an amount that families with any choice aspire to.

Far from lagging the nation in compliance with new federal welfare rules, Michigan had a plan in place to address the changes even before the rules were finalized. Other states may be struggling, but Michigan's plan will meet the new federal rules in fiscal year 2007 and generate net savings to the state of an estimated \$16 million.

The Governor vetoed the legislature's 2005 welfare reform proposal because it lacked protections for Michigan's most vulnerable families, including 36,000 children. The JET approach protects those families and gives them a boost toward permanent self-sufficiency, not a push deeper into poverty.

Sincerely,

Marianne Udow